Community Planning Training

Understanding Program-Level Evaluation

Module 5

**Trainer's Guide
(60 minutes)**

Slides for Module 5

Mouse-Click Icon

(for a computer-based presentation)
The mouse-click icon shows you what information will come up on the slide when you click. (Some slides use several clicks.)

Module 5

Communities That Care

Understanding Program-Level Evaluation

Community Planning Training

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Notes

Mental Set: Evaluation

1. Ask participants to write this sentence on a piece of paper: "Heroes are always conscious of even the most minuscule fallacy because their consciences are impeccable." They cannot ask anyone around them for help on how to spell a word, and they cannot use a dictionary.

2. Now ask how many people would be willing to take what they have written and have it displayed on a billboard in their community.

3. Then ask how many people would first like to check a dictionary, or have someone check their work, to see if their spelling is correct.

Debrief: *The sentence you were asked to write contains some commonly misspelled words. Most people would need to consult a dictionary or have someone proofread their work to be sure that they had spelled everything correctly. This is a simple form of evaluation.*

Evaluation is a necessary step in ensuring that your selected programs, policies and practices are working the way they should be to effectively bring about your community's desired changes and, ultimately, your community's vision for healthy youth. Evaluation planning is not an afterthought, but rather an integral step in the Communities That Care *process. The work you do here will lay the foundation for the evaluation planning you will do in the Community Plan Implementation Training.*

When you worked to develop your outcome-focused plan, you worked with the end in mind. Your community's vision for healthy youth came first, followed by your community-level outcomes and program selections. You then drafted your program-level outcomes to measure and evaluate your program selections.
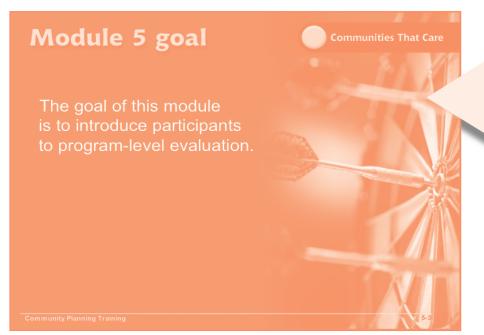
Evaluation examines and measures the outcome-focused plan from the beginning back to the end. In this module, you'll learn the purposes of program-level evaluation and I'll introduce you to some basic evaluation concepts.

Notes

Phase Four:
Creating a Community Action Plan

Communities That Care

Community Planning Training Day Two: Program Planning

Module 5   **Understanding Program-Level Evaluation** ← WE ARE HERE.

Milestone: Develop an evaluation plan

Module 6   **Identifying Systems-Change Strategies**

Milestone: Develop implementation plans for each program, policy or practice selected

Module 7   **Drafting a Community Action Plan**

Milestone: Develop a written Community Action Plan

Module 8   **Next Steps**

Milestone: The community is ready to move to Phase Five: Implementing and Evaluating the Community Action Plan

Community Planning Training   5-2

Review the milestones covered in the Community Planning Training.
Let participants know that this module will begin addressing the milestone "Develop an evaluation plan" by introducing them to evaluation concepts and helping them consider how program-level evaluation will be used in their community. Let them know that they will learn how to develop detailed evaluation plans in the Community Plan Implementation Training.

Module 5 goal

Communities That Care

The goal of this module
is to introduce participants
to program-level evaluation.

Community Planning Training

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Slide 5-3

Notes

Review the goal.

Slide 5-4

Notes

Objectives

Communities That Care

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify the uses of evaluation.

2. Explain basic evaluation concepts.

3. Assess the need for an expert evaluator.

Community Planning Training

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Review the objectives.

Slide 5-5

Communities That Care

Why is evaluation important?

Evaluation helps you:

- monitor implementation fidelity

- monitor progress toward outcomes

- identify problems with program design or selection

- demonstrate achievements

- determine cost-effectiveness.

Community Planning Training   5-5

Objective 1: Identify the uses of evaluation.

Before you begin learning about the evaluation process, you should have a better understanding of why evaluation is important. Here are some ways evaluation can be useful:

- *Evaluation can help you determine if the program is being implemented with fidelity to its original design. This is key to ensuring program effectiveness.*

- *Monitoring progress toward desired outcomes is a fundamental purpose of evaluation in an outcome-focused plan. Writing desired outcomes won't be useful if you don't monitor your progress toward achieving them.*

- *Evaluation results can help you identify problems with program design or selection. For example, if a program isn't achieving the expected outcomes for participants, evaluation results can help you identify the cause and make necessary adjustments.*

- *Evaluation results can be used to demonstrate the success of your prevention efforts to funders and community stakeholders.*

- *Evaluation results can also help you determine if the program's results are worth the cost.*

Determining these factors will help you establish programs that better address the needs of your community.

A careful evaluation determines how much impact your programs have made in your community since implementation. For example, an evaluation of a program that aims to improve skills at refusing drugs and alcohol would measure how well your community's youth have learned these skills.

Slide 5-6

Notes

Key evaluation questions

- What do you want to evaluate?

- What is the purpose of your evaluation?

Communities That Care

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Objective 1: Identify the uses of evaluation.

These two questions are at the heart of evaluation:

- *What do you want to evaluate?*

- *What is the purpose of your evaluation?*

You have already begun to answer these two questions. By drafting desired program-level and community-level outcomes, you have defined how you will measure progress toward the community's vision for healthy youth by monitoring changes in risk factors, protective factors and problem behaviors.

With this in mind, how would you answer the questions on the slide?

Take responses. Possible answers include:

- You want to evaluate your progress toward realizing your outcomes in each stage of the planning process.

- Evaluation has two purposes. The first is to determine how well your programs are being implemented. The second is to determine the impact they are having on your participants (as defined by your outcomes).

So, in the most general sense, evaluation is the way in which you determine if you are making a difference in the lives of your community's youth. In addition, evaluation is often necessary to meet funding requirements.

Slide 5-7

Notes

Objective 1: Identify the uses of evaluation.

Evaluation information is important to different groups of people for different reasons. Knowing who will be using the information, and how, before you begin the evaluation process helps you ensure that the information you collect is beneficial to everyone involved. Collecting information that no one will use wastes time, money and effort.

Evaluation information may be used by any of the groups listed on the slide. With this in mind, can you explain how each of the groups shown might use evaluation information in your community?

Take responses. Possible answers include:

- Community Board members:
  Evaluation information is critical to assessing the progress of achieving desired outcomes and making course corrections based on the evaluation information.

- Key Leaders:
  Evaluation results enable them to meet accountability requirements and continue to guide the *Communities That Care* process in their community.

- Program implementers and site administrators:
  They could use the information to make improvements in implementation and program fidelity.

- Media:
  They could use the information to help inform the community of the progress being made.

- Local interest groups (for example, a local organization trying to prevent drinking and driving):
  They could use the information to help promote the programs in the community.

- Participants, parents, volunteers and supporters, and other community members:
  They could use the information to learn about the process and what impact it's having in the community.

- Sources of funding:
  They could use the information to determine whether their support is having an impact in the community.

Slide 5-8

Notes

Evaluating implementation outcomes

Communities That Care

- Monitor implementation fidelity.

- Identify and correct implementation problems before they result in program failure.

Community Planning Training   5-8
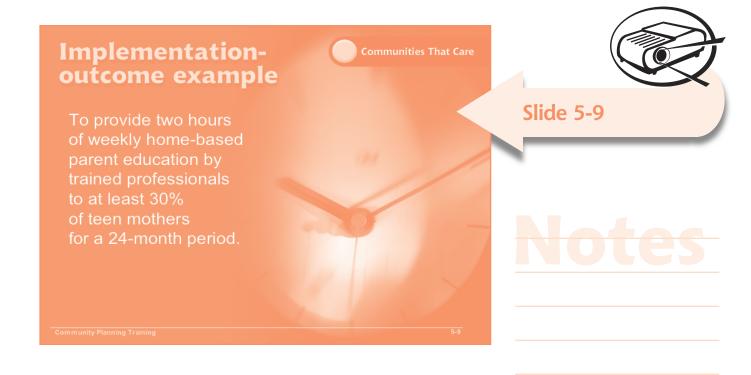
Objective 2: Explain basic evaluation concepts.

Now let's discuss some basic evaluation concepts. We'll start with implementation evaluation, since that's the first type of evaluation you will do when you begin implementing the Community Action Plan.

Earlier in this training, you drafted implementation outcomes that defined how the selected programs should be implemented in your community in order to bring about participant outcomes. If these basic outcomes are met, your programs have a greater chance of achieving the desired outcomes for participants. So evaluating the implementation process is a crucial step in monitoring outcomes.

Evaluating implementation can help you:

- *ensure that the program is being implemented with fidelity to the original design*

- *identify ways that program delivery may need to be altered to better address your community's specific needs.*

In the Community Plan Implementation Training, you'll use your implementation outcomes as a basis for developing more detailed implementation and evaluation plans. For now, let's look at how implementation outcomes help guide your implementation evaluation.

Implementation-outcome example

To provide two hours
of weekly home-based
parent education by
trained professionals
to at least 30%
of teen mothers
for a 24-month period.

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Slide 5-9

Notes

Objective 2: Explain basic evaluation concepts.

Review the slide.

The example shown here is of a typical implementation outcome. On Day One of this training you drafted similar implementation outcomes, and we listed them on the Strategic Planning Worksheet.

Let's take a closer look at the example. The implementation outcome shown on the slide calls for at least 30% of teen mothers to receive home-based parent education weekly for a 24-month period. Can you think of some possible results that you would want to measure to ensure that the implementation outcome is achieved?

Take responses. Some possible answers include:

- determine how many eligible mothers actually received the home visits

- determine the frequency and duration of home visits to each mother in the 24-month period

- record any components or activities that were planned but not delivered.

Slide 5-10

Basic implementation evaluation methods

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- Records
- Activity logs
- Observation
- Questionnaires

Community Planning Training   5-10

Notes

Objective 2: Explain basic evaluation concepts.

Implementation is usually evaluated by keeping detailed records of all program activities. Some common data-collection methods for implementation evaluation include:

- *collecting records such as attendance records and meeting minutes*

- *keeping logs of all activities related to program delivery (usually kept by each implementer)*

- *observing program sessions (usually by trained observers)*

- *having implementers complete questionnaires to report their activities.*

Most of the information can be collected and evaluated by program implementers and site administrators. In some cases, program developers may provide tools and/or technical support to monitor implementation.

Many programs offer evaluation tools. When you make final program selections, you should check with program developers to see if these tools are available. It will be helpful to know what is available before you begin developing implementation evaluation plans in the Community Plan Implementation Training.

Slide 5-11

Objective 2: Explain basic evaluation concepts.

Now let's talk about how your participant outcomes will be used to evaluate the programs, policies and practices you implement.

Evaluating participant outcomes can help you:

* *measure the amount of change that has occurred in participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills or behavior*

* *determine if the program is helping to bring about the changes that will ultimately lead to realizing your community vision.*
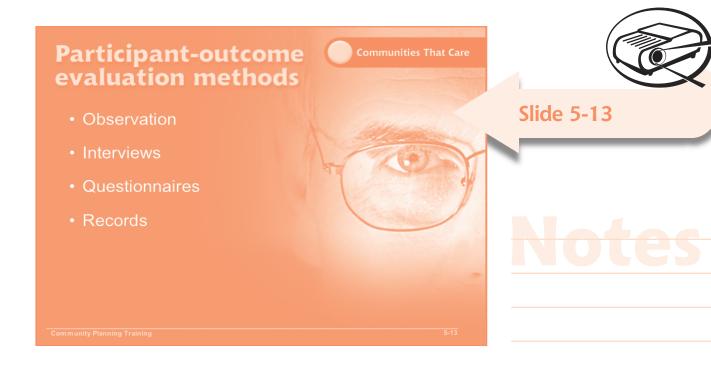
Slide 5-12

Notes

Objective 2: Explain basic evaluation concepts.

Review the slide.

On the slide is an example of a participant outcome. The participant outcomes you write help you determine the kind of information you will need to collect in order to measure changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior as a result of a particular program.

Let's see how you can determine the kinds of information that need to be collected. Take a closer look at the participant outcome on the slide. This outcome aims to increase parents' care-taking and interaction skills, and knowledge of appropriate infant health-care practices. Evaluating this participant outcome would require you to collect the following information:

- *parents' knowledge of appropriate infant health-care practices before and after the program*

- *parents' care-taking and interaction skills before and after the program.*

Participant-outcome evaluation methods

Communities That Care

- Observation
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Records

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Slide 5-13

Notes

Objective 2: Explain basic evaluation concepts.

Most participant-outcome evaluations use pre- and post-tests, which measure participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior before and after they participate in the program. In the Community Plan Implementation Training, we'll discuss participant-outcome evaluation design and methods in more detail. For now, here's a quick overview of some common methods of evaluating participant outcomes:

- *Observation—Observing participants is a direct way of measuring changes in their skills and behavior. For example, a home visitor could observe mothers before and after a program to determine the extent to which they used targeted, effective behavior-management techniques with their toddlers.*

- *Interviews—These can be helpful in determining such factors as self-reported knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. For example, participants in a parent-training program could be interviewed before and after the program to determine whether they use family meetings on a regular basis.*

- *Questionnaires—Questionnaires can determine the same factors as interviews. For example, students in a life-skills training program could be given questionnaires before and after the program to determine changes in their attitudes toward alcohol use and their self-reported alcohol use.*

- *Records—Information can be obtained from the program provider's records, employer or other agency records, or police and court records. For example, for a school behavior-management program, records of student suspensions and attendance could be collected before and after the program. (Confidentiality laws may limit access to certain information.)*

Remember, many programs provide some tools to help you measure participant outcomes.

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Notes

Using an evaluation expert

Communities That Care

An expert evaluator can help:

• select appropriate evaluation design

• develop evaluation measures

• analyze statistical information

• interpret results.

Community Planning Training

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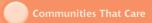### Objective 3: Assess the need for an expert evaluator.

The size, scope or complexity of some programs may require you to seek expert technical assistance in order to do an accurate evaluation. An expert evaluator can help you:

• *select an evaluation design that is appropriate for the types of outcomes you are measuring*

• *develop valid, reliable evaluation measures, such as questionnaires and interview questions*

• *analyze statistical information*

• *determine why desired outcomes were not achieved and find solutions.*

Outside evaluators may also be able to be more objective than program implementers in evaluating program effectiveness. This can lend credibility to the evaluation results.

Depending on the nature of the evaluation and the available resources, you may need an expert evaluator to help with all or part of the evaluation.

Consider an expert evaluator if:

Communities That Care

- The program requires significant technical assistance

- Evaluation tools will need to be developed

- Data collection will be expensive and complex

- Complex data analysis will be required

- The Board lacks the expertise to complete the evaluation.

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Notes

Objective 3: Assess the need for an expert evaluator.

You might consider using an expert evaluator if:

- *the program requires outside training or technical assistance during its implementation*

- *the program does not provide evaluation tools, such as pre- and post-tests for participants*

- *data collection will be extensive and complex*

- *the results will involve statistical information that will be difficult to analyze*

- *the Community Board does not have the expertise to design and carry out any part of the evaluation.*

You should also consider how your evaluation will be used. For example, if you expect the results to be used to compare program effectiveness in different communities, you would need more complex evaluation information than if you were only using the results within your community to monitor outcomes.

After you've finalized program selections and participant outcomes, you can use the Assessing the Need for an Evaluator worksheet in your Participant's Guide to help determine whether you will need to recruit an expert to help with your evaluations.

Assessing the Need for an Evaluator

Program:

_____

Participant outcomes:

_____

_____

1. **How will this evaluation be used? [Example: To report program achievements to funders and the community.]**

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. **Are evaluation tools provided by the program? [Example: No, we will need to develop our own tools.]**

   _____

   _____

3. **How extensive or complex is data collection and analysis likely to be? [Example: The evaluation will require analysis of a large-scale survey of program participants.]**

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. **Will the evaluation require complex statistical analysis?**

   _____

   _____

5. **Do any Community Board members have expertise in evaluation design? If so, list names and areas of expertise.**

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. **Based on the answers to the above questions, will we need the help of an expert evaluator for any part of this evaluation? _____ If so, which parts? (Check all that apply.)**

   ❏ Evaluation design

   ❏ Instrument design

   ❏ Data analysis

   ❏ Interpreting results

Slide 5-16

Notes

Objective 3: Assess the need for an expert evaluator.

If you decide that you need an outside evaluator, how do you find one? Here are some ideas.

- *Find out if local universities have students or faculty with expertise in evaluating the types of programs you are implementing. Psychology, social work and statistics departments are good places to start. You may even be able to get a graduate student to help with your evaluation as part of his or her academic work, which could significantly reduce the costs of evaluation.*

- *You may be able to hire an evaluator through a research or consulting firm.*

Funders or program developers may also be able to help you find evaluators with expertise in the types of programs you are implementing.

Slide 5-17

The Community Action Plan should identify:

Communities That Care

- The nature of the evaluation

- Who will be doing the evaluation

- Resources needed for the evaluation.

Community Planning Training   5-17

Notes

Your Community Action Plan should identify:

- *the nature of the evaluation for each program—for example, how you expect the evaluation to be used, and how complex the evaluation is likely to be*

- *who will be doing the evaluation—for example, you should identify whether you'll be using any outside evaluators*

- *how much the evaluation will cost, including the cost of hiring any expert assistance, as well as any other resources required.*

This information will lay the foundation for the Community Plan Implementation Training, during which you will develop detailed evaluation plans.

Slide 5-18

Phase Four:
Creating a Community Action Plan

Communities That Care

Community Planning Training Day Two: Program Planning

Module 5   **Understanding Program-Level Evaluation**

Milestone: Develop an evaluation plan

Module 6   **Identifying Systems-Change Strategies**

Milestone: Develop implementation plans for each program, policy
or practice selected

Module 7   **Drafting a Community Action Plan**

Milestone: Develop a written Community Action Plan

Module 8   **Next Steps**

Milestone: The community is ready to move to Phase Five:
Implementing and Evaluating the Community Action Plan

Community Planning Training   5-18

NEXT UP

Let participants know that in the next module they will work on systems-change strategies.

Notes

Notes